

Citizen Complaint Process

The mission of the Lockhart Police Department is to maintain and improve community livability by working with all citizens to preserve life, maintain human rights, protect property and promote individual responsibility and community commitment.

Our goals state that our employees must be guided by the principles that every individual has infinite dignity and worth and that we must show respect for the citizens we serve and for the men and women of the department.

A citizen complaint, and its subsequent investigation, causes police to examine the service that we provide to our community and to make necessary improvements in the way we provide services.

Community policing depends on a working partnership between the police and the citizens we serve. We would rather not get to know our citizens as crime victims or complainants, but when problems arise our goal is to resolve the issue quickly and courteously.

If you have a complaint, you can fill out the complaint form and either mail it or drop it off at the Police Department.

Please call the police department at 512-398-4401 if you have any questions or need assistance filling out the form.

Each complaint will be investigated and appropriate follow-up actions taken. You will be informed of the results of the investigation initiated by your complaint.

Thank you for taking your time to let us know how the Lockhart Police Department can better improve the service we provide to the community.

Ernest Pedraza
Chief of Police

Complaint categories assigned by Internal Affairs Office

Property: Allegation that money, property, evidence or other valued items have been taken and not properly accounted for.

Use of force: Allegation of a use of excessive or inappropriate physical or deadly physical force.

Conduct: Allegation of misconduct other than those more specifically defined by another category, which tend to bring reproach or discredit upon the police department or City of Lockhart.

Disparate treatment: Allegation of treatment to an individual that is different from the treatment of another because of race or other (sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, economic status, political or religious beliefs, appearance, handicap, etc).

Communication: Allegation relating to attitude, rude conduct or verbally abusive conduct other than those addressed in the disparate treatment category.

Performance: Allegation of work performance that fails to meet or conform to department standards or requirements of an administrative nature, such as lateness, misuse of sick time, etc.

Procedure: Allegation of conduct which violates a department policy, procedure or special order or the orders of a superior officer and which are not more specifically addressed in another category.

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Lockhart Police Department
214 Bufkin Lane
Lockhart, Texas 78644
(512) 398-4401

How does the Police Department receive complaints?

People can call the police department at 512-398-4401, write a letter to Internal Affairs or the Chief's Office, stop by the Police Department and talk to an officer or supervisor, or fill out a Citizen Complaint Form available at the Police Department and mail it back to Internal Affairs.

What does Internal Affairs do with the complaint?

The Internal Affairs Office creates a case file and gives the complaint a case number. The IA Office also assigns it to a category, according to the nature of the complaint. The categories are defined on the back page of the brochure.

The IA Office determines how the case will be processed and/or investigated in one of four ways:

1. Investigates the complaint thoroughly.
2. Refers it for criminal investigation. Criminal conduct complaints are given to the Criminal Investigations Division for investigation like any other criminal allegation.
3. Declines to look into the matter further. If, in the initial stages of the investigation, it is determined that the allegation is obviously false, involves another agency, or is without merit, the case will not be investigated further. The complainant will receive a notification letter explaining the right to appeal the decision of the Chief of Police.
4. Assigns it back to the division involved. The division supervisor will investigate and contact the complainant to report the results.

How are cases reviewed for completeness?

After a case has been investigated and reviewed, it is given one of four classifications. The classification given is known as the finding.

Sustained:

The officer who is the subject of the complaint was found to be in violation of department policy or procedure.

Inconclusive:

There was not enough evidence to prove or disprove the allegation(s).

Exonerated:

The actions of the officer who is the subject of the complaint were within the guidelines of department policy and procedures. The incident occurred, but was lawful and proper, or was justified under existing conditions.

Unfounded:

The complaint is false. Based on the facts of the investigation, there is no basis to the allegation.

When does the Chief review cases?

The Chief of Police reviews all Internal Affairs investigation reports to assure the results are complete and fair.

The Chief also determines what appropriate action should be taken based on the results of the investigation. If a complaint is sustained, he decides what disciplinary actions are required.

When the complaint file is closed, the reports are kept in the office of the Chief and kept confidential within the limits of the Texas Public Information Act and other applicable laws.

How are the people involved notified?

The complainant is notified by letter with the results and findings of the investigation, and is notified of how to appeal the decision to the Chief of Police.

The officer involved and the officer's supervisor receive a copy of the letter sent to the complainant that describes the results and findings of the investigation. The employee involved can also appeal the disciplinary action.

Note:

This brochure is a summary of the police department policies and general orders; it is not a complete account of the investigation, discipline, and appeal process.

For clarity the term "officer" was used. Complaints can be filed and processed on actions by any employee of the police department, communications department, municipal court, or animal control.

Please feel free to contact Chief Pedraza or Lieutenant Knudsen, the Internal Affairs Officer, if you have questions about the Citizen Complaint Process or this brochure.

Revised: February 13, 2017